

## Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 STATE 109752 TOSEC 110760

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SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT JAMES RESTON OP-ED COLUMN NEW YORK TIMES WEDNESDAY MAY 5 HEADED "FUNNIEST SHOW IN TOWN."
2. THE FUNNIEST THING THAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SO FAR IS THE EMERGENCE OF RONALD REAGAN AS AN EXPERT ON FOREIGN AND MILITARY POLICY. NOT SINCE JULIE ANDREWS TURNED ELIZA DOOLITTLE INTO "MY FAIR LADY" HAS THERE BEEN SUCH AN AMUSING AND UNLIKELY TRANSFORMATION.
3. IN THOSE FAR-OFF AND FORGETTABLE DAYS WHEN RICHARD NIXON WAS PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND PRESIDED OVER WHAT USED TO BE CALLED "THE WESTERN WHITE HOUSE" AT SAN CLEMENTE, HE USED TO ORDER HENRY KISSINGER TO FLY OVER TO SACRAMENTO AND "BRIEF" GOVERNOR REAGAN ON THE AMBIGUOUS MYSTERIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 STATE 109752 TOSEC 110760

4. MR. KISSINGER, OF COURSE, DID AS HE WAS TOLD, BUT

TESTIFIED LATER THAT SELDOM IN HIS LONG EXPERIENCE AS A TEACHER HAD HE COME ACROSS A MORE GULLIBLE PUPIL WITH LESS KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUBJECT. YET HERE IS MR. REAGAN NOW ON CENTER STAGE, RUSHING TO THE RESCUE OF THE PANAMA CANAL,

PROTECTING THE PENTAGON THAT IS DOWN TO A BUDGET OF A MERE \$115 BILLION A YEAR, CONDEMNING PRESIDENT FORD FOR LOSING TO THE RUSSIANS IN THE MILITARY PLAY-OFFS, AND TOSSING KISSINGER OVERBOARD.

5. AS A THEATRICAL EXERCISE, WITH WEE JIMMY OUT IN FRONT ON THE OTHER STAGE, IT'S THE ONLY SHOW IN TOWN, AND THE BEST ROLE RONNIE EVER HAD; BUT AS A POLITICAL PERFORMANCE, EVEN THOUGH HE HAS HAD GOOD NOTICES IN TEXAS AND INDIANA, IT'S OBVIOUSLY A LOSER, AND EVEN A LAUGHER.

6. GOVERNOR REAGAN, WITH HIS PANAMA AND MILITARY BUDGET POLICIES AND HIS ATTACKS ON HIS OWN PARTY'S PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY OF STATE, HAS ACHIEVED SOMETHING THE DEMOCRATS NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE: HE HAS UNIFIED BOTH BARRY GOLDWATER AND NELSON ROCKEFELLER, OF ALL PEOPLE, IN OPPOSITION TO HIS CAMPAIGN RHETORIC.

7. SENATOR GOLDWATER, WHO ISN'T ACCUSTOMED TO CUTTING UP REPUBLICAN CONSERVATIVES ON NATIONAL TELEVISION, ADVISED MR. REAGAN THE OTHER DAY ON "MEET THE PRESS" TO STOP CONDEMNING MR. FORD'S EFFORTS TO GET A COMPROMISE ON THE PANAMA CANAL UNLESS HE WANTED TO GO TO WAR ON THE ISSUE.

8. "I HAVE TO SUPPORT FORD'S POSITION ON IT (THE PANAMA CANAL)," GOLDWATER SAID, "AND I THINK REAGAN WOULD TOO IF HE KNEW MORE ABOUT IT." ASKED ABOUT THIS, GOVERNOR REAGAN REPLIED: "I DON'T THINK THAT IS THE QUESTION. THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES DO NOT WANT TO GIVE THE PANAMA CANAL AWAY."

9. ASKED HOW FAR HE WOULD GO TO SUSTAIN HIS POSITION, REAGAN SAID, "HOW FAR WOULD WE GO TO STOP SOMEBODY FROM TAKING THE STATE OF ALASKA?" HE MAINTAINED THAT THE CANAL ZONE "IS SOVEREIGN UNITED STATES TERRITORY JUST THE SAME AS UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 109752 TOSEC 110760

ALASKA IS AND AS THE PART OF TEXAS THAT CAME OUT OF THE - GADSDEN PURCHASE AND THE STATES THAT WERE CARVED OUT OF THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE."

10. WITH ANSWERS LIKE THAT, REAGAN COULDN'T PASS A TEST IN FRESHMAN AMERICAN HISTORY. NELSON ROCKEFELLER, ON ANOTHER NETWORK PROGRAM, FLUNKED HIM COLD. "MR. REAGAN IS TELLING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THINGS THAT ARE NOT TRUE ABOUT PANAMA,"

HE SAID. ROCKEFELLER RECALLED THAT WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT, PRESIDENT AND LATER CHIEF JUSTICE, HAD INFORMED PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT THAT "WE DO NOT HAVE SOVEREIGNTY--SOV-EREIGN POSSESSION OF THE PANAMA CANAL."

11. MR. ROCKEFELLER ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT MR. REAGAN WAS

A "TREMENDOUSLY ATTRACTIVE PERSON," BUT INACCURATE AND IRRESPONSIBLE IN HIS CHARGES.

12. "I THINK HE IS TOTALLY DECEPTIVE IN THE WAY HE IS RAISING THE ISSUES," ROCKEFELLER SAID. "I THINK HE IS BLAMING FORD FOR SOMETHING THAT IS NOT FORD'S PROBLEM. HE SHOULD BE BLAMING CONGRESS FOR OUR MILITARY WEAKNESS AT THIS PARTICULAR POINT, NOT THE PRESIDENT....A MAN WHO DOESN'T DO HIS HOMEWORK ON KEY ISSUES OF NATIONAL SECURITY--ONE HAS TO HAVE DOUBTS AS TO HIS CAPACITY AS PRESIDENT.

13. MR. GOLDWATER, AS USUAL, PUT IT PLAIN: "UNLESS WE COME TO SOME AGREEMENT WITH THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT," HE SAID, "THERE IS GOING TO BE GUERRILLA WAR."

14. WHAT HE DID NOT SAY, BUT IS WELL KNOWN TO THE LEADERS OF BOTH PARTIES HERE, IS THAT IF WE FOLLOW THE REAGAN LINE, THE GUERRILLA WAR WILL NOT BE BY PANAMA ALONE BUT BY VOLUNTEER FIGHTERS FROM ALL OVER LATIN AMERICA AGAINST THE UNITED STATES.

15. MR. REAGAN COULD CONFIRM THIS QUITE QUICKLY BY CHECKING WITH FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SCHLESINGER, WHO IS SUPPOSED TO BE HIS MILITARY ADVISER. SCHLESINGER HAS APPROVED NEGOTIATING A COMPROMISE WITH PANAMA. REAGAN, HOWEVER, IS NOT LOOKING FOR THE FACTS BUT REACHING FOR UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 109752 TOSEC 110760

VOTES, AND MAYBE THE FUNNIEST THING OF ALL IS THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE BELIEVE HIM.

16. BUT PROBABLY NOT FOR LONG. HE LOOKS AND SOUNDS PERSUASIVE ONLY UNLESS YOU DON'T THINK ABOUT WHAT HE SAYS. IT IS ABSURD TO TAKE HIM SERIOUSLY ON FOREIGN OR MILITARY AFFAIRS, AND RIDICULOUS TO BELIEVE, WHATEVER HIS OCCASIONAL SUCCESSES, THAT THE REPUBLICAN PARTY, WHICH HAS THE ALLEGIANCE OF ONLY 19 PERCENT OF THE REGISTERED VOTERS, WOULD REJECT THEIR OWN PRESIDENT AND DIVIDE THEIR OWN PARTY FOR A MAN WHO WOULD RATHER BE ON STAGE THAN ON LINE WITH THE TRUTH.

17. NOBODY CAN BLAME THE OLD TROUPER FOR HOLDING ON TO THE LIMELIGHT. IT'S THE BEST MISCAST PART HE EVER HAD, BUT

IT'S MORE THEATER THAN POLITICS AND WON'T LAST FOR LONG.  
(END TEXT.) SISCO

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